# Site preparation underway for the North Park Lake Restoration Project

PITTSBURGH – The US Army Corps of Engineers, Pittsburgh District, has awarded a $4 million contract to Charles J. Merlo, Inc. of Mineral Point, Pa. to remove sediment and install fish habitats as part of a North Park Lake aquatic ecosystem restoration project in Allegheny County.

The Army Corps is partnering with Allegheny County to drain the lake and subsequently remove sediment as part of the project. The project will restore the lake to its original depth and bottom configuration.

Allegheny County awarded the Site Preparation Contract to Allison Park Contractor's Incorporated. Allison Park is on site and is currently working on installing the access ramps as well as the laydown areas for the Phase I and Phase II sediment removal. They are also tasked with preparing the Wildwood Disposal Site as well as the wetland protection berm.

The Army Corps' contract is the first phase of a two-phase sediment removal effort. The county will contribute cost-share funds as part of the Corps' first phase and execute the second phase as well as site preparation work under separate county contracts to complete the restoration project. The Phase II sediment removal package is currently out for bid.

The project falls under the Water Resources Development Act 1996 Section 206 Aquatic Restoration Program which allows the Corps to partner with local communities to improve degraded aquatic ecosystems.

The Phase I work at North Park Lake consists of excavation from the upstream end of the North Fork Pine Creek arm to an area near the dam. Water depths in this section of the lake range from shallow shoreline areas to approximately 12 feet at the most downstream end of the lake. The Corps will deepen this area to up to 24 ft.

Allegheny County has drained the lake and is partnering with the Corps as well as the Phase I and Site Prep contractors in efforts to keep the lake drained. The Phase I and Phase II contractor(s) will remove the sediment in the dry, which offers both cost and environmental benefits. The excavation should reduce the presence of an invasive aquatic plant called Eurasian Water Milfoil and will allow the placement of habitat structures on the lake bottom to provide cover for fish and to increase benthic production.

Coir logs, which are composed of coconut fiber, will be placed along portions of the shoreline to prevent erosion and encourage wetland vegetation growth near the shore. These habitats are important for fish spawning and provide nursery areas for young fish.

Phase I work will also include installation, staging, and removal of temporary stream diversions, including temporary crossings; and wetland vegetation planting, including coir log plantings and surrounding shoreline plantings.

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission in partnership with Allegheny County and the Corps conducted a successful fish salvage operation on October 7-8, 2009. The recovery's purpose was to save as many of the remaining fish as possible by relocating them to other lakes. Fish species such as blue gill, crappie, bass, sunfish, and catfish were moved upstream to Marshall Lake. It was estimated that three quarters of the lake's fish were successfully relocated.